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Jeanette Harder, Faculty Spotlight

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Jeanette Harder

Engagement Spotlights

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Thank you for all you do for your community!

Community engagement and service are fundamental components of UNO's identity.

Dr. Jeanette Harder and her team exemplify UNO's commitment to community engagement.

Additional Resources

[STEPs Website - NEW!](#)[STEPs 2015-16 Annual Report](#)[UNO](#) / [Campus Commitment to Community Engagement](#) / [Engagement Spotlights](#) / [Jeanette Harder](#)

Jeanette Harder, Ph.D., founded the UNO nonprofit STEP^s.

Support and Training for the Evaluation of Programs (STEP^s)

Dr. Jeanette Harder began her journey with STEP^s in 2011, but has been a faculty member at UNO since 2004. The STEP^s' mission is to provide participatory, utilization-focused evaluation for organizations serving children, youth, and families in poverty. STEP^s goals parallel UNO's goals: to be student-centered, academically excellent, and community engaged.

"I had been teaching program evaluation and partnering with community organizations for a few years, but when the need grew, I felt compelled to meet that need. The vision for a program like STEP^s came from Theresa Barron-McKeagney who was then the social work director and it only grew after hiring Emily Nguyen, then a graduate student in social work and public administration. It was Emily's vision for us to be housed in the Weitz CEC that really moved us ahead." Emily is now working full time with the Omaha Community Foundation doing similar work to what she experienced with STEP^s. STEP^s has grown at a rapid pace since its inception, currently operating with four full time professional staff, four graduate student workers, three UNO faculty affiliates through the College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS), and many student and alumni contractors.



Dr. Harder and the STEP^s Team

UNO graduate students working with STEP^s receive hands-on program evaluation and training skills. These opportunities extend into academic and professional experiences such as conference presentations, UNO awards and recognition, as well as training and evaluation experiences with community organizations. Dr. Harder takes great pride in seeing the graduate students who work for STEP^s grow in their evaluation, writing, and conference presentation skills. These opportunities for growth help students develop well-rounded and impressive resumes, leading to great job opportunities after they graduate. "I love seeing them go into careers similar to their jobs at STEP^s—many go on to doctoral programs and faculty positions." Dr. Harder also enjoys helping faculty get the glimpse of what it is like to do community engaged evaluation.

CPACS

CPACS Community Engagement

Share Your Story:

Did you organize or participate in a community-oriented project or service? UNO wants to hear from you!

UNO is committed to community engagement in its broadest form, and wants to feature your community service story.

[Click here](#) to share your story.

STEPs provides community partners with an array of services, including process and outcome evaluation, needs assessments, social returns on investment, and data visualization. "We love being responsive to our community partners," says Harder. "Each contract is unique and we tailor services to each community partner's needs." Because of their capacity-building work, small nonprofits better understand data, giving them the ability to land grants that they would not otherwise get. "Through helping organizations achieve their missions, we hope to alleviate poverty."

Dr. Harder is extremely grateful for her research home at the UNO CPACS Grace Abbott School of Social Work, and those who have encouraged her work along the way. "What a joy and privilege to be at UNO where community engagement is not only encouraged and supported, but a strategic goal."

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